

Message Text

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PAGE 01 SANAA 00009 041104Z

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ACTION NEA-09

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 NSAE-00 NSCE-00

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FM AMEMBASSY SANAA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 4800

INFO AMEMBASSY JIDDA IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY ABU DHABI

AMEMBASSY AMMAN

AMEMBASSY CAIRO

AMEMBASSY KUWAIT

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY TEHRAN

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NCEUR

C O N F I D E N T I A L SANAA 0009

JIDDA PASS AMBASSADOR SCOTES

EO 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, PINT, YE, SA

SUBJECT: YEMEN'S MAN ON HORSEBACK FLIES IN

REF: SANAA 2605 AND 2632

1. CHARTERED SAG AIRCRAFT ARRIVED SANAA MORNING JAN 4 CARRYING
CONSULTATIVE ASSEMBLY PRESIDENT SHAIKH ABDALLAH AL-AHMAR
SHAIKH SINAN ABU LUHUM, DEP CIC LTC MUHAHID ABU SOHP ST, AND,
MOST SIGNIFICANTLY, FORMER PRIMIN LT. GEN. HASAN AL-AMRI.
ARRIVAL OF LATTER IS MOST SIGNIFICANT EVENT IN YAR SINCE
JUNE 13, 1974 CORRECTIVE MOVEMENT AND CERTAINLY SIGNALS
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PAGE 02 SANAA 00009 041104Z

RESUMPTION OF INTENSE INTERNAL POLITICAL ACTIVIEY FOLLOWING

ID AL-ADHA LULL (REFTEL).

2. WE HAD BEEN HEARING INCREASINGLY STRONG RUMORS IN LAST FEW DAYS OF EXPECTED RETURN BY AMRI. DR. IRYANI (MINSTATE FOR DEVELOPMENT) TOLD ME DEC 31 IT WAS PART OF STRONG SAG-SHIKHLI EFFORT INVOLVING REPLACEMENT OF PRESIDENT HAMDI BY AMRI (FORMER IN SAG CMEW BEING TOO INDECISIVE) AND PRIMIN AYNI BY FORMER PRIMIN HAJRI. TWO RELIABLE SOURCES INCIDZ TALLY TELLS US THAT AMRI AND HAJRI VERY CLOSE, SINCE FORMER SAVED LATTER FROM EXECUTION AS PROYAROYALIST IN EARLY DAYS OF REVOLUTION. SAG CHARGE GUFAYDI, HOWEVER, TOLD ME JAN 2 THAT HIS GOVERNMENT HAD FULL CONFIDENCE IN HAMDI (FACT MAY BE THAT MORE LIBERAL ELEMENT IN SAG DOES, BUT PRINCE SULTAN AND OTHER "HARD-LINERS" DO NOT).

3. SEVERAL QUESTIONS WILL NEED TO BE ANSWERED IN NEXT FEW DAYS. MOST IMPORTANT IS "WHO'S IN CHARGE?" RUMORS ALREADY CIRCULATING THAT AMRI WILL BE CHAIRMAN OF COMMAND COUNCIL AND COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF WITH

CONFIRMED. ALTERNATIVELY, AMRI COULD BOLSTER HAMDI'S POSITION (HAMDI HAS LONG USED THREAT OF AMRI'S RETURN BY BOGEYMAN TO KEEP LEFTIST, ESPECIALLY SHEIKH SINAN IN LINE).

4. SECOND QUESTION IS FATE OF PRIMIN AYNI WHOSE POSITION NOW LOOKS VERY SHAKY AND WHOSE OFFER OF RESIGNATION MAY NOW BE ACCEPTED WITH HAJRI AS STRONG FAVORITE TO REPLACE. IF AYNI, GOES, THIS WILL CERTAINLY SIGNAL CLEAR SHIFT TO RIGHT IN GOVERNMENT, WITH CONSERVATIVES DOMINANT EVEN IF HAMDI REMAINS. THERE ARE SIGNS OF THIS ALREADY--PICTURES OF LEADERS IN GOVT OFFICES HAVE BEEN BANNED IN FAVOR OF KORANIC INSCRIPTIONS AND RECENT HAMDI STATEMENTS, INCLUDING MEETING WITH SANAA MOSQUE PREACHERS AND SPEECH AT PLO OFFICE, HAVE BEEN REplete WITH RELIGIOUS ALLUSIONS.

5. REACTION OF PDRY CERTAIN TO BE NEGATIVE, SINCE AMRI KNOWN TO FAVOR HARD LINE MILITARY SOLUTION AGAINST SOUTH. RADICAL LEFTISTS IN YAR, IN COLLUSION WITH PDRY, MIGHT STEP UP TERRORIST ACTIVITY. MORE MODERATE LEFTISTS ASSOCIATED
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PAGE 03 SANAA 00009 041104Z

WITH AYNI MIGHT WELL BE FORCED INTO MORE RADICAL POSITION AS POLITICS POLARIZE.

6. ANOTHER QUESTION IS FORTUNE ABU LUHUM FAMILY. DESPITE OBVIOUS EFFORT AT SOLIDARITY IN JOINT RETURN OF LEADERS, SHAIKH SINAN HAS OBVIOUSLY SUFFERED SETBACK. (ONE MAJOR REASON WE UNDERSTAND FOR HIS DEPARTURE WAS ATTEMPT TO BLOCK AMRI'S RETURN BY OFFERING HIS ABSENCE AS QUID PRO QUO). ABU SHAWARIB,

WHOSE PROLONGED DEPARTURE FOR TRAINING IN EGYPT FELL THROUGH WHEN GOE DECLINED PROVIDE TRAINING, WAS ALREADY DISTANCING HIMSELF FROM SHAIKH SINAN BEFORE DEPARTURE BY STRESSING HIS TIES TO SHAIKH ABDALLAH AND CONSERVATIVE SHAIKHS.

7. FINAL QUESTION IS ACCEPTABILITY OF AMRI. THERE IS GREAT YEARNING IN YAR FOR STRONG MAN WHO COULD END INTERNAL SQUABBLING AND AMRI TO GREAT EXTENT HAS BEEN MYTHOLOGIZED AS "MAN ON HORSE-BACK" WHO COULD PROVIDE STRONG RULE. THIS, OF COURSE, IGNORES FACT THAT POLITICAL IMPEDIMENTS TO STRONG GOVERNMENT ARE STRUCTURAL, NOT MATTER OF PERSONALITIES. AMRI ELICITS STRONG LOYALTIES BUT ALSO STRONG HATREDS FROM THOSE WHO REMEMBER HIS TOUGH BRUTAL RULE AS PRIME MINISTER AND ACTING PRESIDENT DURING MUCH OF 1963-67 CIVIL WAR PERIOD. THEY ALSO REMEMBER HIS IMPULSIVE MURDER OF LOCAL CITIZEN IN 1971 IN WELL-PUBLICIZED PERSONAL DISPUTE (BLOOD MONEY FOR HIS MURDER WAS PAID IN EARLY 1974 BY SHAIKH ABDALLAH PERSONALLY, SOME SAY WITH SAUDI MONEY). WHILE IT IS CLEAR THAT LEFTIST WILL OPPOSE AND MANY RIGHTIST SUPPORT, WHAT IS NOT CLEAR IS HOW VARIOUS ELEMENTS IN ARMY WILL REACT. PART WILL DEPEND ON ROLE, AS YET UNSURE, OF HAMDI IN AMRI'S RETURN. MOST UNIT LEADERS, EXCEPT ABU LUHUMS, WILL MOST LIKELY SUPPORT IF HAMDI HAS AGREED.
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